

Dear Friend,

I have just finished reading this newsletter on praying with thanksgiving and it has brightened my day. I fondly recall the numerous times God has faithfully come through in ways that only He can. Jesus doesn't ask us to have an untested faith; by this I mean that He asks us to literally put His promises to the test.

Concerning giving financially to His work, for example, He says, "*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try me* ('prove me' in the King James Version) *now in this,*' says the Lord of hosts, *if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it*" (Malachi 3:10). I have lived this and, in fact, have proven the faithfulness of God. His presence, peace and provision are priceless. I can pray with thanksgiving today because I know how faithful He is—based on how faithful He has been.

My prayer for you is that after you have read this letter you will be encouraged to believe God, as I do, for everything you need to make it through all that lies ahead. Perhaps you will begin to pray with thanksgiving even before seeing the soon-to-come answer!

With you, thankfully,

Pastor Carter Conlon

LEARNING TO PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING

by Carter Conlon

"Be anxious for nothing" (Philippians 4:6). These words were written by the apostle Paul who, of all people, certainly seemed to have a reason to be anxious. He was shipwrecked, thrown into jail, beaten, stoned. And almost every time he preached somebody was trying to kill him!

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Nevertheless, Paul is the man into whose hand God put a quill that wrote on a parchment to this Philippian church: "*Be anxious for nothing.*" I suppose we could focus on just those four words for the rest of our Christian life, for you and I know how hard it is not to be anxious about anything. But Paul was reminding them, "Do not worry about it. Do not worry about where you are going to go, how you are going to get there, what you are going to do when you

get there. Do not worry about what your life is going to amount to. God has a plan for you that is bigger than you could even think or imagine!"

The verse continues: "*But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6–7).

The end result of not being anxious—of having a heart that truly trusts in God—is a peace that transcends human understanding. In other words, it is not based on anything we think, feel, know or see; it is based on confidence in God. And when people see our confidence in God, it surpasses their understanding as much as it does ours.

■ DO NOT WORRY

Jesus also had a similar exhortation for His disciples, "*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens,*

for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?” (Luke 12:22–24).

I remember when the Lord was leading me to leave my career and start pastoring a small group of Christians who were meeting in a hotel. The salary that they offered me did not even pay my electrical bill. In the natural it was foolishness, yet in my heart, I felt drawn by God. I am not going to suggest there was no battle in the decision. I was concerned about my children, about how I was going to feed and clothe them, where we were going to live, and how we were going to pay our bills.

However, one Sunday while I was still a police officer, I was actually preaching to this small group of people, “Give your all to God, walk with God!” Yet I was in the battle of my life, for I was preaching something that I was in the throes of deciding for myself. It was wintertime, and as I was preaching, I suddenly looked out the window and saw four or five little brown sparrows in the driveway. It had been snowing, but a truck had plowed the ground and the birds were all pecking the ground. I could not see what they were eating, but they were being nourished.

Immediately, the verse came into my mind: “*Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?*” (Luke 12:24). Sometimes God is trying to comfort us, yet we just push it out of our mind, thinking, “Yeah, that’s nice.” I continued preaching, still exhorting the people to give their all to God. I looked out the window

again and saw those little birds pecking at the same spot. I still could not see what they were eating. And again, the Lord said to me, “Are you not worth more than these birds? I do not want you to worry about what your future is going to be, how you are going to feed your children, where you are going to live, and the things that you are going to have.”

The verse goes on to say, “*And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?*” (Luke 12:25–28).

***He is not a
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I love the fact that the Lord spoke so simply to us. He said, “Just take a look at the flowers. I dressed them, and see how beautiful they look. They are not worried about it. They just let me do what I do, and I am faithful to them.”

■ **SEEK FIRST
THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

“And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these

things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12:29–31). I like how it is written in Matthew: “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33). This has been such a central verse for my life as a believer in Jesus Christ.

After we went into full-time ministry, our house burned down to the ground, and we literally lost everything. We had to stay at the home of another pastor, and we did not even have clothes for our children. I remember going out for a run one of those mornings, and I quoted this verse back to God, “Lord, You told me that if I sought first Your kingdom and Your righteousness, You would add all these things to me. So I am just going to take You at Your Word. I am going to jog and not worry about it because I cannot change this situation. I am just going to trust You to be who You say You are to me.” Within just a short season, so much provision came in from so many unexpected places that we were able to purchase a brand-new home outright. We paid cash for it, got all new furniture and new clothes for our children. I even got a pair of ice skates that I had always wanted but was never able to afford!

Jesus continued, “*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32). Remember, it is the pleasure of God; He is not a reluctant God! He did not go to the cross to die for you just to go back to heaven and fold His arms, watching how you make it in life. No, He died to be God to you. He died so that, as the Scripture says, “you might have life and that you might have it more

abundantly” (see John 10:10). The writer of Hebrews also reminds us, *“He who promised is faithful... do not cast away your confidence”* (Hebrews 10:23 and 35).

*Through difficulty,
through sorrow,
through times
of excitement and
times of despair,
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that came our
way—God has
been faithful.*

■ GOD WILL SUPPLY

I remember yet another time we saw God’s faithfulness as a family. Iron had gotten into our well and ruined our water supply, and we did not have any money. And so I gathered Pastor Teresa and our little kids, opened the Bible, and showed them that same promise: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33). I also showed them where it says in the book of James, *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures”* (James 4:3). I then assured them, “This is not for our pleasure. God knows we need water, and He knows that we do not have the money. Now the contractor said it will cost \$3,000 to dig a brand-new well and connect it to the house. I am going to have him do it anyway because we need water. God is going to provide!”

So the contractor came and dug a new well. He hit a beautiful vein

of crystal clear, cold water. The day before the invoice was due to arrive, I went to the mailbox and found a card from my father. I thought it was strange, so I opened the card and saw that he had written: “Your grandmother left money for your education when she died. We did not use it all for your education. Here is what was left.” And it was a check for \$3,000!

The bill actually came to about \$2,981, so we had enough money left after paying for the water supply to go out for a large pizza as a family to celebrate.

■ BUILDING OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM

I have been saved forty-three years now, and I can tell you that God has been absolutely faithful. Through flood, through fire, through trial, through sickness, through difficulty, through sorrow, through times of excitement and times of despair, all of these things that came our way—God has been faithful. I have come to the point in life where I am not worried about what I am going to wear, where I am going to live or what I am going to eat. I refuse to live in an anxious place. I will never go back there for the rest of my life, for I know Him and I have witnessed how faithful He is. Whatever He asks me to do, that is what I will do, and I know that He will supply everything I need.

I believe that the Lord built my faith up in the early days so I could trust Him for the bigger days. He knew I would one day be on a field in a war-torn area of the world, more than one time, actually, and I was going to need faith. You see, the Lord does

not just take you from zero to that kind of faith. He starts building your confidence in Him. When you allow Him to prove Himself to be God in the small things, then you start moving to the bigger things throughout life. Perhaps one day you will find yourself in a place where you need an absolute miracle of God. But you will look back on your life and remember how God never failed you. You will remember how God has been lavishly generous to you and truly delighted to give you the kingdom. Before you know it, you will leave that anxious place and be praying with thanksgiving, just as the verse instructs us, for you will be confident that God is going to answer your prayer!

Carter Conlon
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SUMMIT VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY, APRIL 18!

Have you ever wondered what its like to be a Summit student? We'd love to show you! Join us on Sunday, April 18 at 2 PM for a virtual open house where we give you the inside scoop!

Our virtual open house is a great way to check out the dorms, walk on campus with students, pop into a classroom, hear a bit of a chapel service, and take a few minutes to have your questions answered by our staff and faculty.

Want more? For the first time ever, you will have a chance to virtually drop into a class LIVE where you can interact with comments or ask your questions to faculty in real time while the class is happening.

There might be one or two other surprises in store (did someone say a behind the scenes look at our new worship night??). You don't want to miss it! See you on the 18th!

WHEN
Sunday, April 18 at 2 PM

WHERE
Facebook | YouTube
Links to Summit's Facebook page and YouTube channel can be found at summitpa.org.



Carter Conlon is General Overseer of Times Square Church, Inc. He joined the pastoral staff as an associate pastor in 1994 and was senior pastor from 2001 to 2020.

Times Square Church is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City, founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade."

Senior Pastor
Tim Dilena

Church Online
Sunday 10 AM & On demand
Tuesday 7 PM (Prayer Service)

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